CHAPTER I.

The Wrecking Boss.

News of the wreck at Smoky Creek reached Medicine Bend from Point of Rocks at five o'clock. Sinclair, in person, was overseeing the making up of his wrecking train, and the yard, usually quiet at that hour of the morning, was alive with the hurry of men and engines. In the trainmaster's room of the weather-beaten headquarters building nicknamed by railroad men "The Wickiup," early comers—sleepy-faced, keen-eyed trainmen—lounged on the tables and in chairs discussing the reports from Point of Rocks, and among them crew-callers and messengers moved in and out. Two minutes after they had their orders and were pulling out of the upper yard, with right of way over everything to Point of Rocks.

The wreck had occurred just west of the creek. A fast east-bound freight train, double-headed, had left the track on the long curve around the hill, and when the wrecking train backed through Ten Shed cut the sun streamed over the heaps of jammed and twisted cars strung all the way from the point of the curve to the foot of Smoky hill. The crew of the train that lay in the ditch walked slowly up the track to where the wreckers had pulled up, and the freight conductor asked for Sinclair. Men rigging the derrick pointed to the hind car. The conductor, swinging up the caboose steps, made his way inside among the men that were passing out tools. The air within was bluish-thick with tobacco smoke, but through the haze the freightman saw facing him, in the far corner of the den-like interior, a man seated behind an old dining-car table, finishing his breakfast; one glimpse was enough to identify the dark beard of Sinclair, foreman of the bridges and boss of the wrecking gang.

Beside him stood a steaming coffee tank, and in his right hand he held an enormous tin cup that he was about to raise to his mouth when he saw the freight conductor. With a laugh, Sinclair threw up his left hand and beckoned him over. Then he shook his hair just a little, tossed back his head, opened an unusual mouth, drained the cup at a gulp, and cursing the freightman fraternally, exclaimed: "How many cars have you ditched this time?"

The trainman, a sober-faced fellow, answered, dryly: "All I had."

"Running too fast, eh?" glared Sinclair.

With the box cars piled 40 feet high on the track, the conductor was too old a hand to begin a controversy. "Our time's fast," was all he said.

Sinclair rose and exclaimed: "Come on!" And the two, leaving the car, started up the track. The wrecking boss paid no attention to his companion as they forged ahead, but where the train had hit the curve he scanned the track as he would a blue print. "They'll have your scalp for this," he declared, abruptly.

"I reckon they will."

"What's your name?"

"Stevens."

"Looks like all day for you, doesn't it? No matter; I guess I can help you out."

Where the merchandise cars lay, below the switch, the train crew knew that a tramp had been caught. At intervals they heard groans under the wreckage, which was piled high there. Sinclair stopped at the derrick, and the freight conductor went on to where his brakeman had enlisted two of Sinclair's giants to help get out the tramp. A brake beam had crushed the man's legs, and the pallor of his face showed that he was hurt internally, but he was conscious and moaned softly. The men had started to carry him to the way car when Sinclair came up, asked what they were doing, and ordered them back to the wreck. They hastily laid the tramp down. "But he wants water," protested a brakeman who was walking behind, carrying his arm in a sling.

"Water!" bawled Sinclair. "Have my men got nothing to do but carry a tramp to water? Get ahead there and help unload those refrigerators. He'll find water fast enough. Let the damned hobo crawl down to the creek after it."

The tramp was too far gone for resentment; he had fainted when they laid him down, and his half-glazed eyes, staring at the sky, gave no evidence that he heard anything.

The sun rose hot, for in the Red desert sky there is rarely a cloud. Sinclair took the little hill nearest the switch to bellow his orders from, running down among the men whenever necessary to help carry them out. Within 30 minutes, though apparently no impression had been made on the great heaps of wrenched and splintered equipment, Sinclair had the job in hand.

The freight conductor, Stevens, afraid of no man, had come up to speak to Sinclair, and Sinclair, with a smile, laid a cordial hand on his shoulders. "Stevens, it's all right. I'll get you out of this. Come here." He led the conductor down the track where they had walked in the morning. He pointed to flange-marks on the ties. "See there—there's where the first wheels left the track, and they left on the inside of the curve; a thin flange under the first refrigerator broke. I've got the wheel itself back there for evidence. They can't talk fast running against that. Damn a private car line, anyway! Give me a cigar—haven't got any? Great guns, man, there's a case of Key Weste open up ahead; go fill your pockets and your grip. Don't be bashful; you've got friends on the division, if you are Irish, eh?"

"Sure, only I don't smoke," said Stevens, with diplomacy.

"Well, you drink, don't you? There's a barrel of brandy open at the switch."

The brandy cask stood up-ended near the water butt, and the men dipped out of both with cups. They were working now half naked at the wreck. The sun hung in a cloudless sky, the air was still, and along the right of way huge wrecking fires added to the scorching heat. Ten feet from the water butt lay a flattened

"Water!" Dawled Sinclair, "Have My Men Got Nothing to Do But Carry Tramps to Water?"

mass of rags. Crusted in smoke and blood and dirt, crushed by a vise of beams and wheels out of human semblance, and left now an aimless, twitching thing, the tramp clutched at Stevens' foot as he passed. "Water!"

"Hello, old boy, how the devil did you get here?" exclaimed Stevens, retreating in alarm.

"Water!"

Stevens stepped to the butt and filled a cup. The tramp's eyes were closed. Stevens poured the water over his face; then he lifted the man's head and put a cupful to his lips.

"Is that hobo alive yet?" asked Sinclair, coming back smoking a cigar. "What does he want now? Water? Don't waste any time on him."

"It's bad luck refusing water," muttered Stevens, holding the cup.

"He'll be dead in a minute," growled Sinclair.

The sound of his voice roused the failing man to a fury. He opened his bloodshot eyes, and with the dregs of an ebbing vitality cursed Sinclair with a frenzy that made Stevens draw back. If Sinclair was startled he gave no sign. "Go to hell!" he exclaimed, harshly.

With a ghastly effort the man made his retort. He held up his blood-soaked fingers. "I'm going all right—I know that," he gasped, with a curse, "but I'll come back for you!"

Sinclair, unshaken, stood his ground. He repeated his imprecation more violently; but Stevens, swallowing, stole out of hearing. As he disappeared, a train whistled in the west.

CHAPTER II.

At Smoky Creek.

Karg, Sinclair's crew foreman, came running over to him from a pile of merchandise that had been set off the right of way on the wagon road for loot. "That's the superintendent's car coming, ain't it, Murray?" he cried, looking across the creek at the approaching train.

"What of it?" returned Sinclair.

"Why, we're just loading the team."

The incoming train, an engine with a way car, two flats, and the Bear Dance derrick, slowed up at one end of the wreck while Sinclair and his foreman talked. Three men could be seen getting out of the way car—McCloud, the superintendent, and Reed Young, the Scotch roadmaster, and Bill Dancing. A gang of trackmen filed slowly out after them.

The leaders of the party made their way down the curve, and Sinclair, with Karg, met them at the point. McCloud asked questions about the wreck and the chances of getting the track clear, and while they talked Sinclair sent Karg to get the new derrick into action. Sinclair then asked McCloud to walk with him up the track to see where the cars had left the rail. The two men showed in contrast as they stepped along the ties. McCloud was not alone younger and below Sinclair's height; his broad Stetson hat flattened him somewhat. His movement was deliberate beside Sinclair's litheness, and his face, though burned by sun and wind, was boyish, while Sinclair's was strongly lined.

"Just a moment," suggested McCloud, mildly, as Sinclair hastened past the goods piled in the wagon road. "Whose team is that, Sinclair?" The road followed the right of way where they stood, and a four-horse team of heavy mules was pulling a loaded ranch wagon up the grade when McCloud spoke.

Sinclair answered cordially. "That's my team from over on the Frenchman. I picked them up at Denver. Nice mules, McCloud, ain't they? Give me mules every time for heavy work. If I had just a hundred more of 'em the company could have my job—what?"

"Yes. What's that stuff they are hauling?"

"That's a little stuff mashed up in the merchandise car; there's some tobacco there and a little wine, I guess. The cases are all smashed."

"Let's look at it."

"Oh, there's nothing there that's any good, McCloud."

"Let's look at it."

As Bill Dancing and Young walked behind the two men toward the wagon, Dancing made extraordinary efforts to wink at the roadmaster. "That's a good story about the mules coming from Denver, ain't it?" he muttered. Young, unwilling to commit himself, stopped to light his pipe. When he and Dancing joined Sinclair and McCloud the talk between the superintendent and the wrecking boss had become animated.

"I always do something for my men out of a wreck when I can; that's the way I get the work out of them," Sinclair was saying. "A little stuff like this," he added, nodding toward the wagon, "comes handy for presents, and the company couldn't get any salvage out of it, anyway. I get the value a dozen times over in quick work. Look there!" Sinclair pointed to where the naked men heaved and wrenched in the sun. "Where could you get white men to work like that if you didn't jolly them along once in a while? What? You haven't been here long, McCloud," smiled Sinclair, laying a hand with heavy affection on the young man's shoulder. "Ask any man on the division who gets the work out of his men—who gets the wrecks cleaned up and the track cleared. Ain't that what you want?"

"Certainly, Sinclair; no man that ever saw you handle a wreck would undertake to do it better."

"Then what's all this fuss about?"

"We've been over all this matter before, as you know. The claim department won't stand for this looting; that's the whole story. Here are ten or twelve cases of champagne on your wagon—soiled a little, but worth a lot of money."

"That was a mistake loading that up; I admit it; it was Karg's carelessness."

"Here is one whole case of cigars and part of another," continued McCloud, climbing from one wheel to another of the wagon. "There is a thousand dollars in this load! I know you've got good men, Sinclair. If they are not getting paid as they should be, give them time and a half or double time, but put it in the pay checks. The freight loss and damage account increased 200 per cent last year. No railroad company can keep that rate up and last, Sinclair."

"Hang the company! The claim agents are a pack of thieves," cried Sinclair. "Look here, McCloud, what's a pay check to a man that's sick, compared with a bottle of good wine?"

"When one of your men is sick and needs wine, let me know," returned McCloud; "I'll see that he gets it. Your men don't wear silk dresses, do they?" he asked, pointing to another case of goods under the driver's seat. "Have that stuff all hauled back and loaded into a box car on track."

"Not by a damned sight!" exclaimed Sinclair. He turned to his ranch driver, Barney Rebstock. "You haul that stuff where you were told to haul it, Barney." Then: "You and I may as well have an understanding right here," he said, as McCloud walked to the head of the mules.

"By all means, and I'll begin by countermanding that order right now. Take your load straight back to that car," directed McCloud, pointing up the track. Barney, a ranch hand with a cigarette face, looked surlily at McCloud.

Sinclair raised a finger at the boy. "You drive straight ahead where I told you to drive. I don't propose to have my affairs interfered with by you or anybody else, McCloud. You and I can settle this thing ourselves," he added, walking straight toward the superintendent.

"Get away from those mules!" yelled Barney at the same moment, cracking his whip.

McCloud's dull eyes hardly lightened as he looked at the driver. "Don't swing your whip this way, my boy," he said, laying hold quietly of the near bridle.

"Drop that bridle!" roared Sinclair. "I'll drop your mules in their tracks if they move one foot forward. Dancing, unhook those traces," said McCloud, peremptorily. "Dump the wine out of that wagon box, Young." Then he turned to Sinclair and pointed to the wreck. "Get back to your work."

The sun marked the five men rooted for an instant on the hillside. Dancing jumped at the traces, Reed Young clambered over the wheel, and Sinclair, livid, faced McCloud. With a bitter denunciation of interlopers, claim agents, and "fresh" railroad men generally, Sinclair swore he would not go back to work, and a case of wine crashing to the ground infuriated him. He turned on his heel and started for the wreck. "Call off the men!" he yelled to Karg at the derrick. The foreman passed the word. The derrickmen, dropping their hooks and chains in some surprise, moved out of the wreckage. The axmen and laborers gathered around the foreman and followed him toward Sinclair.

"Boys," cried Sinclair, "we've got a new superintendent, a college guy. You know what they are; the company has tried 'em before. They draw the salaries and we do the work. This one down here now is making his little kick about the few pickings we get out of our jobs. You can go back to your work or you can stand right here with me till we get our rights. What?"

Half a dozen men began talking at once. The derrickman from below, a hatchet-faced wiper, with the visor of a greasy cap cocked over his ear, stuck his head between the uprights and called out shrilly: "What's er matter, Murray?" and a few men laughed. Barney had deserted the mules. Dancing and Young, with small regard for loss or damage, were emptying the wagon like deckhands, for in a fight such as now appeared imminent, possession of the goods even on the ground seemed vital to prestige. McCloud waited only long enough to assure the emptying of the wagon, and then followed Sinclair to where he had assembled his men. "Sinclair, put your men back to work."

"Not till we know just how we stand," Sinclair answered, insolently. He continued to speak, but McCloud turned to the men. "Boys, go back to your work. Your boss and I can settle our own differences. I'll see that you lose nothing by working hard."

"And you'll see we make nothing, won't you?" suggested Karg.

"I'll see that every man in the crew gets twice what is coming to him—all except you, Karg. I discharge you now. Sinclair, will you go back to work?"

"No!"

"Then take your time. Any men that want to go back to work may step over to the switch," added McCloud.

Not a man moved. Sinclair and Karg smiled at each other, and with no apparent embarrassment McCloud himself smiled. "I like to see men loyal to their bosses," he said, good-naturedly. "I wouldn't give much for a man that wouldn't stick to his boss if he thought him right. But a question has come up here, boys, that must be settled once for all. This wreck-looting on the mountain division is going to stop—right here—at this particular wreck. On that point there is no room for discussion. Now, any man that agrees with me on that matter may step over here and I'll discuss with him any other grievance. If what I say about looting is a grievance, it can't be discussed. Is there any man that wants to come over?" No man stirred.

"Sinclair, you've got good men," continued McCloud, unmoved. "You are leading them into pretty deep water. There's a chance yet for you to get them out of serious trouble if you think as much of them as they do of you. Will you advise them to go back to work—all except Karg?"

Sinclair glared in high humor. "Oh, I couldn't do that! I'm discharged!" he protested, bowing low.

"I don't want to be overhasty," returned McCloud. "This is a serious business, as you know better than they do, and there will never be as good a time to fix it up as now. There is a chance for you, I say, Sinclair, to take hold if you want to now."

"Why, I'll take hold if you'll take your nose out of my business and agree to keep it out."

"Is there any man here that wants

She Was Something Like an Apparition.

to go back to work for the company?" continued McCloud, evenly. It was one man against 30; McCloud saw there was not the shadow of a chance to win the strikers over. "This lets all of you out, you understand, boys," he added; "and you can never work again for the company on this division if you don't take hold now."

"Boys," exclaimed Sinclair, better humored every moment, "I'll guarantee you work on this division when all the fresh superintendents are run out of the country, and I'll lay this matter before Bucks himself, and don't you forget it!"

"You will have a chilly job of it," interposed McCloud.

"So will you, my hearty, before you get trains running past here," retorted the wrecking boss. "Come on, boys."

The disaffected men drew off. The emptied wagon, its load scattered on the ground, stood deserted on the hillside, and the mules drooped in the heat. Bill Dancing, a giant and a dangerous one, stood lone guard over the loot, and Young had been called over by McCloud. "How many men have you got with you, Reed?"

"Eleven."

"How long will it take them to clean up this mess with what help we can run in this afternoon?"

Young studied the prospect before replying. "They're green at this sort of thing, of course, they might be fussing here till to-morrow noon, I'm afraid; perhaps till to-morrow night, Mr. McCloud."

"That won't do!" The two men stood for a moment in a study. "The merchandise is all unloaded, isn't it?" said McCloud, reflectively. "Get your men here and bring a water bucket with you."

McCloud walked down to the engine of the wrecking train and gave orders to the train and engine crews. The best of the refrigerator cars had been rerailed, and they were pulled to a safe distance from the wreck. Young brought the bucket, and McCloud pointed to the caskful of brandy. "Throw that brandy over the wreckage, Reed."

The roadmaster started. "Burn the whole thing up, eh?"

"Everything on the track."

"Bully! It's a shame to waste the liquor, but it's Sinclair's fault. Here, boys, scatter this stuff where it will catch good, and touch her off. Everything goes—the whole pile. Burn up everything; that's orders. If you can get a few rails here, now, I'll give you a track by sundown, Mr. McCloud, in spite of Sinclair and the devil."

The remains of many cars lay in heaps along the curve, and the trackmen like firebugs ran in and out of them. A tongue of flame leaped from the middle of a pile of stock cars. In five minutes the wreck was burning; in ten minutes the flames were crackling fiercely; then in another instant the wreck burst into a conflagration that rose hissing and seething a hundred feet straight up in the air.

From where they stood, Sinclair's men looked on. They were nonplused, but their boss had not lost his nerve. He walked back to McCloud. "You're going to send us back to Medicine Bend with the car, I suppose?"

McCloud spoke amiably. "Not on your life. Take your personal stuff out of the car and tell your men to take theirs; then get off the train and off the right of way."

"Going to turn us loose on Red desert, are you?" asked Sinclair, steadily.

"You've turned yourselves loose."

"Wouldn't give a man a tie-pass, would you?"

"Come to my office in Medicine Bend and I'll talk to you about it," returned McCloud, impassively.

"Well, boys," roared Sinclair, going back to his followers, "we can't ride on this road now! But I want to tell you there's something to eat for every one of you over at my place on the Crawling Stone, and a place to sleep—and something to drink," he added, cursing McCloud once more.

CHAPTER III.

Dicksie.

The wreckers, drifting in the blaze of the sun across the broad alkali valley, saw the smoke of the wreck-fire behind them. No breath of wind stirred it. With the stillness of a signal column it rose, thin and black, and high in the air spread motionless, like a huge umbrella, above Smoky creek. Reed Young had gone with an engine to wire for re-enforcements, and McCloud, active among the trackmen until the conflagration spent itself, had retired to the shade of the hill.

Reclining against a rock with his legs crossed, he had clasped his hands behind his head and sat looking at the iron writhing in the dying heat of the fire. The sound of hoofs aroused him, and looking below he saw a horsewoman reining up near his men at the wreck. She rode an American horse, thin and rangy, and the experienced way in which she checked him drew him back almost to his haunches. But McCloud's eyes were fixed on the slender figure of the rider. Her boot flashed in the stirrup while she spoke to the nearest man, and her horse stretched his neck and nosed the brown alkali-grass that spread thinly along the road.

To McCloud she was something like an apparition. He sat spellbound until the trackman indiscreetly pointed him out, and the eyes of the visitor, turning his way, caught him with his hands on the rock in an attitude openly curious. She turned immediately away, but McCloud rose and started down the hill. The horse's head was pulled up, and there were signs of departure. He quickened his steps. Once he saw, or thought he saw, the rider's head so turned that her eyes might have commanded one approaching from his quarter; yet he could catch no further glimpse of her face. A second surprise awaited him. Just as she seemed about to ride away, she dropped lightly from the horse to the ground, and he saw how confident in figure she was. As she began to try her saddle-girths, McCloud attempted a greeting. She could not ignore his hat, held rather high above his head as he approached, but she gave him the slightest nod in return—one that made no attempt to explain why she was there or where she had come from.

"Pardon me," ventured McCloud, "have you lost your way?"

He was immediately conscious that he had said the wrong thing. The expression of her eyes implied that it was foolish to suppose she was lost, but she only answered: "I saw the smoke and feared the bridge was on fire."

Something in her voice made him almost sorry he had intervened; if she stood in need of help of any sort it was not apparent, and her gaze was confusing.

"I presume Mr. Sinclair is here?" she said, presently.

"I am sorry to say he is not."

"He usually has charge of the wrecks, I think. What a dreadful fire!" she murmured, looking down the track. "Was it a passenger wreck?" She turned abruptly on McCloud to ask the question. Her eyes were brown, too, he saw, and a doubt assailed him. Was she pretty?

"Only a freight wreck," he answered.

"I thought if there were passengers hurt I could send help from the ranch. Were you the conductor?"

"Fortunately not."

"And no one was hurt?"

"Only a tramp. We are burning the wreck to clear the track."

"From the divide it looked like a mountain on fire. I'm sorry Mr. Sinclair is not here."

"Why, indeed, yes, so am I."

"Because I know him. You are one of his men, I presume."

"Not exactly; but is there anything I can do—"

"Oh, thank you, nothing, except that the pretty bay colt he sent over to us has sprung his shoulder."

"He will be sorry to hear it, I'm sure."

"But we are doing everything possible for him. He is going to make a perfectly lovely horse."

"And whom may I say the message is from?" Though disconcerted, McCloud was regaining his wits. He felt perfectly certain there was no danger, if she knew Sinclair and lived in the mountains, but that she would sometime find out he was not a conductor. When he asked his question she appeared slightly surprised and answered easily: "Mr. Sinclair will know it is from Dicksie Dunning."

McCloud knew her then. Every one knew Dicksie Dunning in the high country. This was Dicksie Dunning of the great Crawling Stone ranch, most widely known of all the mountain ranches. While his stupidity in not guessing her identity before overwhelmed him, he resolved to exhaust the last effort to win her interest.

"I don't know just when I shall see Mr. Sinclair," he answered, gravely, "but he shall certainly have your message."

A doubt seemed to steal over Dicksie at the change in McCloud's manner. "Oh, pardon me—I thought you were working for the company."

"You are quite right, I am; but Mr. Sinclair is not."

Her eyebrows rose a little. "I think you are mistaken, aren't you?"

"It is possible I am; but if he is working for the company, it is pretty certain that I am not," he continued, heaping mystification on her. "However, that will not prevent my delivering the message. By the way, may I ask which shoulder?"

"Shoulder!"

"Which shoulder is sprung."

"Oh, of course! The right shoulder, and it is sprung pretty badly, too, Cousin Lance says. How very stupid of me to ride over here for a freight wreck!"

McCloud felt humiliated at having nothing better worth while to offer. "It was a very bad one," he ventured.

"But not of the kind I can be of any help at, I fear."

McCloud smiled. "We are certainly short of help."

Dicksie brought her horse's head around. She felt again of the girth as she replied: "Not such as I can supply, I'm afraid." And with the words she stepped away, as if preparing to mount.

McCloud intervened. "I hope you won't go away without resting your horse. The sun is so hot. Mayn't I offer you some sort of refreshment?"

Dicksie Dunning thought not.

"The sun is very warm," persisted McCloud.

Dicksie smoothed her gauntlet in the assured manner natural to her. "I am pretty well used to it."

But McCloud held on. "Several cars of fruit were destroyed in the wreck. I can offer you any quantity of grapes—crates of them are spoiling over there—and pears."

"Thank you, I am just from luncheon."

"And I have cooled water in the car. I hope you won't refuse that, so far out in the desert."

Dicksie laughed a little. "Do you call this far? I don't; and I don't call this desert by any means. Thank you ever so much for the water, but I'm not in the least thirsty."

"It was kind of you even to think of extending help. I wish you would let me send some fruit over to your ranch. It is only spoiling here."

Dicksie stroked the neck of her horse. "It is about 18 miles to the ranch house."

"I don't call that far."

"Oh, it isn't," she returned, hastily, professing not to notice the look that went with the words, "except for perishable things!" Then, as if acknowledging her disadvantage, she added, swinging her bridle rein around: "I am under obligations for the offer, just the same."

"At least, won't you let your horse drink?" McCloud threw the force of an appeal into his words, and Dicksie stopped her preparations and appeared to waver.

"Jim is pretty thirsty, I suppose. Have you plenty of water?"

"A tender foil. Had I better lead him down while you wait up on the hill in the shade?"

"Can't I ride him down?"

"It would be pretty rough riding."

"Oh, Jim goes anywhere," she said, with her attractive indifference to situations. "If you don't mind helping me mount."

"With pleasure."

She stood waiting for his hand and McCloud stood, not knowing just what to do. She glanced at him expectantly. The sun grew intensely hot.

"You will have to show me how," he stammered at last.

"Don't you know?"

He mentally cursed the technical education that left him helpless at such a moment, but it was useless to pretend. "Frankly, I don't."

"Just give me your hand. Oh, not in that way! But never mind, I'll walk," she suggested, catching up her skirt.

"The rocks will cut your boots all to pieces. Suppose you tell me what to do this once," he said, assuming some confidence. "I'll never forget."

"Why, if you will just give me your hand for my foot, I can manage, you know."

He did not know, but she lifted her skirt graciously, and her crushed boot rested easily for a moment in his hand. She rose in the air above him before he could well comprehend. He felt the quick spring from his supporting hand, and it was an instant of exhilaration. Then she balanced herself with a flushed laugh in the saddle, and he guided her ahead among the loose rocks, the horse nosing at his elbow as they picked their way.

Crossing the track, they gained better ground. As they reached the switch and passed a box car, Jim shied, and Dicksie spoke sharply to him. McCloud turned.

In the shade of the car lay the tramp.

"That man lying there frightened him," explained Dicksie. "Oh," she exclaimed, suddenly, "he has been hurt!" She turned away her head. "Is that the man who was in the wreck?"

"Yes."

"Do something for him. He must be suffering terribly."

"The men gave him some water awhile ago, and when we moved him into the shade we thought he was dead."

"He isn't dead yet!" Dicksie's face, still averted, had grown white. "I saw him move. Can't you do something for him?"

She reined up at a little distance. McCloud bent over the man a moment and spoke to him. When he rose he called to the men on the track. "You are right," he said, rejoining Dicksie; "he is very much alive. His name is Wickwire; he is a cowboy."

"A cowboy!"

"A tramp cowboy."

"What can you do with him?"

"I'll have the men put him in the caboose and send him to Barnhardt's hospital at Medicine Bend when the engine comes back. He may live yet. If he does, he can thank you for it."

(To be continued.)

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HARD-WORKING VOLUNTEERS.

Why the National Guard Waiting Lists Have Disappeared.

(From Uncle Sam's Magazine.)

Prior to the Spanish-American War many of the national guard command had waiting lists of applicants for enlistment.

"The real motives for enlistment in those days were undoubtedly the opportunities for good times offered by membership. These consisted of the companionship of sociable comrades during weekly drills—drills which certainly called for no study and little physical effort—the after drill chat over the little supper, the monthly company meeting, where everything germane to the interests of the company was discussed amid much eloquence, the post meeting supper, the spring games and the fall games, the company smoker or theatre party and the company dance or dances.

For one week every two years the local company would soldier in the open at the State camp. This one week's camp usually involved much preparation. Many pairs of white duck trousers and white cotton gloves were got together. Where the command possessed a distinctive dress uniform it was put in the very best condition. A great number of boxes containing eatables, drinkables, toilet articles, etc., in endless variety were accumulated.

As most national guardsmen know, this has all been changed. The main qualification is no longer sociability but huskiness. The concern now is not how long can he dance but how far can he hike.

To-day his eyesight must be perfect, his physical condition excellent. He must not be too short or too tall, or too stout or too lean, and he must possess mental application with plenty of sand.

Drills are frequent—in some commands as many as two or three drills a week for nine months of the year, with much study in addition. There is no longer much time for social diversions.

Discipline is harsher and infractions thereof are in many instances punished by heavy fines. State camp would not be recognized by some of the old timers. In alternate years the army manoeuvres are substituted for State camp. There is little or no time to receive visitors.

In the case of the army manoeuvres the place is usually inaccessible for visitors. The ceremonies are fewer. The time of the troops is fully occupied in tactical instruction and in the demonstration of minor problems. Needless to remark, nothing is taken by the men except what may be carried in the haversack and blanket roll, and house parties in camp are few and far between.

The truth is that the old national guard is really existed largely for pleasure and somewhat largely for business. The present national guard exists for business only.

FOR BETTER DIRT ROADS.

With a sandy soil and a subsoil of clay or clay and gravel plow deep, so as to raise and mix the clay with the surface soil and sand.

The combination forms a sand clay road at a trifling expense.

If the road be entirely of sand a mistake will be made if it is not plowed, unless clay can be added.

Such plowing would merely deepen the sand, and at the same time break up the small amount of hard surface material which may have formed.

If the subsoil is clay and the surface scant in sand or gravel, plowing should not be resorted to, as it would result in a clay surface rather than one of sand or gravel.

A road foreman must know not only what to plow and what not to plow, but know how and when to plow.

If the road is of the kind which, according to the above instructions, should be plowed over its whole width the best method is to run the first furrow in the middle of the road and work out to the sides thus forming a crown.

Results from such plowing are the greatest in the spring or early summer.

In ditches a plow can be used to good advantage, but should be followed by a scraper or grader.

To make wide, deep ditches, nothing better than the ordinary drag scraper has yet been devised.

For hauls under 100 feet or in making "fills" it is especially serviceable.—Farmers' and Drovers' Journal.

SERVICE COMMISSION DATES.

Newport, July 15.—Rufus W. Spear, clerk of the public service commission, makes public the following dates for hearings:

July 22, a public investigation of the accident near Inwood to the "Montreal and Boston air line" when the engine and four cars left the track, resulting in the slight injury to several passengers.

July 23, at Newport a hearing on the petition of the Boston & Maine railroad asking for the elimination of the crossing on the Indian Point road and the crossing next northerly therefrom.

July 28, at Woodstock, in regard to the elimination of two grade crossings on the Woodstock railroad.

July 29, at Brattleboro, on petition of the State's attorney of Windham county vs. the Central Vermont Railway company, relating to freight rates and lack of facilities on the West River branch division.

BENNINGTON HIGH PRINCIPAL.

Bennington, July 15.—A. H. Dickinson of Homer, N. Y., has been elected principal of the Bennington high school and will take up his residence here the last of the month. He is 24 years of age, a graduate of Syracuse University and the Cortland normal school.

Frank C. Phillips of Bennington, a graduate of the Bliss Business College of North Adams, has been chosen to take charge of the new business department to be installed at the high school with the opening of the fall term.

FREE SILVER AGAIN.

(From the Charleston News and Courier, Dem.)

John Hays Hammond has been expressing his views in the Wall Street Journal about the world's mining operations. He looks for a large increase in the production of silver, and says that "there is a strong probability of international cooperation in the near future to prevent further depreciation in silver," in the interest, as he explained, not of silver mines alone, but also of the merchants of the various countries interested in Oriental trade. Does this mean that our next ticket is to be Bryan and Hammond? Isn't it queer how these Republicans adopt the Democratic politics and make them go? There is Mr. Taft; but what's the use? In his income and corporation tax schemes to pay the Roosevelt debts hasn't he taken his remedies right out of the Nebraskan's mouth or from the Nebraskan's platform? But what's the difference whether we get these "reforms" of our fiscal policies through one man or another, so long as we get them? The voice may be the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau; and so it is coming to pass that our Republican masters are fattening on the unearned [illegible] Democratic statesmanship.